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5 May 1989

The Early History of Heber City Utah

*is not easily*

The history of Heber City ~~cannot be~~ separated from the history of this whole Provo River Valley and Wasatch County.

There were eons of time when this valley was uninhabited and pristine in all aspects.

The Era of Foreign Ownership of these lands began with the American Indians when they moved into these lands, hundreds of pre-historic years ago. Aztecs, in 1195, were known to be at the shores of the Great Salt Lake.

*from Mexico  
after*

Then came the Spanish with Christopher Columbus in 1492 and declared the Americas to belong to Spain. This was followed by Hernando Cortez exploits.

The Yuta Indians were finally, <sup>and</sup> mainly settled in the <sup>Uintah</sup> ~~Great~~ Basin to the east of here, but they came frequently to this valley to hunt and fish. They called it the "Valley of Timpanogos," in honor of "The Mountain" they loved so much.

The Shoshone or Snake Indians had their base on the shores of the Great Salt Lake and roamed to the east and north of there. They too, frequented this valley to hunt and fish. In 1776 these people were known as snake-eaters, sorcerers or the Puagumpe band and were the ancestors of the Shoshone.

*The Earliest record of caucasians entering Wasatch County was:*

In 1776 two Spanish Franciscan Friars named Father Francisco Atanasio de Dominguez, <sup>the elder</sup> and Father Sylvestre Velez de Escalante, <sup>settled</sup> left their Mission in Santa Fe, New Mexico to find a trade route with their Mission in Monterey, California. They traveled north and west to find a crossing of the great Colorado River. They finally crossed the White River near the Colorado-Utah line and then crossed the Green River traveling west along the base of the Uintah <sup>Mts.</sup> reaching Strawberry Valley. They stayed on Trout Creek a few days and fished. From here they traveled south along Strawberry ridge down Diamond Fork Canyon into Spanish Fork Canyon and to the south shores of Utah Lake. This was late September 1776 and snow began to fall.

*1605  
Santa  
Fe  
settled  
by  
Spanish*

With two native guides they went south and west via the Sevier River, and eastside of Sevier Lake. Thence, via Beaver River and over the mountains to Escalante Valley. From here they traveled east to the Colorado River to Moquis villages and Zuni Indian villages and then back to Sante Fe.

They never reached Timpanogos Valley or Provo River Valley nor their desired goal of Monterey, but they did discover new lands and possible sites for new missions, and established the <sup>first and</sup> earliest trail into Utah and eastern Wasatch County which has been used till this day.

1600- to 1800

The Era of the Move West; This was initiated by explorations by government explorers, surveyors, photographers, and later fur trappers, mountain men and other men of curiosity and great courage. By 1773 the British had sent a fur trader, Alexander MacKenzie, west across Canada to the Pacific Ocean and declared that to be British Territory.

By 1803 Utah Territory was part of the Spanish lands, due to the exploits of Hernando Cortez.

In 1803 President Thomas Jefferson made the Louisiana Purchase which covered the drainage of the Missouri and Mississippi Rivers. This allowed the beginning of westward exploration and expansion from the eastern seaboard, for anyone who had the courage and curiosity to do so.

In 1803 Meriwether Lewis and William Clark were commissioned by Pres. Thomas Jefferson and Congress to explore the west via the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. They reached the Pacific Coast.

In 1808 and 1809 "the patriarch of the Fur Traders", John Jacob Astor of New York City, founded the American Fur Company and later established Astoria as an Indian Trading Post, at the mouth of the Columbia River on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, in the Oregon Territory.

This began a whole series of fur traders and mountain men to explore many western rivers and mountains.

Among these important men was a Frenchman by the name of Etienne Provost, who traversed this valley at least twice in 1824 and 1825. Provo, and Provo River were named after this guide, fur hunter, trapper, and explorer, and this valley was henceforth called Provo River Valley. "Old Pino" or Jacques Fournias accompanied Provost in 1824. William Henry Ashley came through this valley in 1825 with Etienne Provost as a guide and with many renowned explorer trappers with them. Ashley Valley, Ashley Forrest, etc. are named for William Henry Ashley.







General Sidney Albert Johnston had been harrassed all across the plains by Lot Smith and others burning forage ahead of the Johnston column and setting fires to their wagon trains. By the time they reached Echo Canyon it was cold September 1857 and they found it best not to go through Echo Canyon. So they retreated to Fort Bridger only to find the Fort had been burned to the ground. Then they traveled to Camp Scott to spend the winter in tents as best as they could.

Alfred Cummings had been appointed by USA President James Buchanan to be the 2nd Governor of the Utah Territory and he accompanied General Sidney Albert Johnston in this "Utah Expedition". Brigham Young welcomed the 2nd Governor into Utah Territory and took him into Salt Lake City to see for himself that Salt Lake had been abandoned. Governor Alfred Cummings became convinced that: 1) Battle emplacements and fortification in Echo Canyon were well supplied. 2) There was no insurrection. 3) That he had come to govern a people who were no longer in Salt Lake City, Utah. 4) That this "Utah Expedition" had made a 2000 mile march to no avail. So he went back to Camp Scott and informed General Johnston of his findings and advised Johnston to march through Echo Canyon and through Salt Lake Valley in peace and establish camp to the west of Salt Lake Valley.

In early spring of 1858 General Johnston did what Governor Cummings told him and marched to the site of Camp Floyd after a brief stop at the Jordan River. There he remained with his men till the Civil War broke out in 1860.

In 1858 the order came again from Brigham Young for 500 men to build a rough road up Provo Canyon. This was accomplished in the summer of 1858.

William Madison Wall, Aaron Daniels, and George Washington Bean had already, in 1858 brought cattle to their ranches in the south end of this valley, now covered by Deer Creek Reservoir.

In Summer of 1858, James Chauncey Snow, the Utah County Surveyor, and a few men came into the valley and surveyed 20 acre plots for farms, near London Springs which they called London Town.

Eleven men were chosen by Brigham Young to make a pioneer settler's exploring group to come into Provo River Valley in early 1859. The Presiding Elder of that group was William Meeks. They spent that winter of 1858-59 making preparations. Ten of these eleven men were English Converts to the LDS Church, and one was Canadian.

They started out in late April of 1859 to come up Provo Canyon with three wagons and three yoke of oxen, leaving their women and children behind. <sup>In the Canyon</sup> They encountered a ¼ mile-wide snowslide and this necessitated them hawling their goods over the slide on foot, then taking their wagons apart and hawling them over the slide on foot. Here they reassembled them on the other side of the slide. They finally arrived at the William Madison Wall ranch at the lower end of this valley on 1st May 1859.

When they arrived, they could see three men plowing in the north end of the valley by London Springs. They had two span of oxen on one plow and two span on another. They found out that these three men were: William Davidson, Robert Broadhead, and James Bailey Davis. William's wife was also there. Two of these men were English Converts and one was Scotch.

Also in the Summer of 1859, Jesse Fuller, the Deputy County Surveyor of Utah County came and surveyed the west half of what is now called Heber City into 20 acre plots.

Then these eleven men chose their plots of ground and started building log cabins along a Fort Line in Northwest Heber, and prepared ground for planting.

"Forting in" continued on during 1859 and eighteen families remained over that winter of 1859 and 1860.

The Fort was located within these points; the corner of 1st west and 2nd north; the corner of 3rd west and 2nd north; the corner of 5th north and 3rd west; and the corner of 5th north and 1st west.

When the time came to choose a name for this community it was natural for these English Converts to name it after the man who taught them the Gospel of Jesus Christ in their homeland of Great Britain, Heber C. Kimball, so this town was named "Heber".

The people stayed in the Fort Heber for seven years, resisting Ute Indian raids and trying to raise crops outside the fort during summer days, and tending cattle and sheep close by.

Finally on 20 August 1867 after much preparation, Presiding Bishop <sup>Joseph</sup> Stacy Murdock brought Chief Tabby to his home on 115 East 300 North and after a big beef barbeque, <sup>in the John Carroll 100</sup> they signed a Peace Treaty which has been honored to this day.

Now started the Era of Settling, Building, Taming the Land for Agriculture, Industry and Creation of Self-Support Systems.

Progress was made and many accomplishments were achieved.

Heber City, became the hub of industry for all surrounding towns. It was the largest sheep shipping point in the whole United States.

Heber City, also contributed to the culture, and industry of Duchesne, Vernal, Hanna, Tabiona, Kamas, Provo Canyon, Park City, and even Alpine. This aura of (prosperity) continued on past the 1970's and into the 1980's.

May the people of this community always share their visions of future prosperity, ingenuity, cooperation, and industry of their Pioneer forebearers, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ Amen.

R Raymond Green, MD  
R. Raymond Green, M.D.

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Now the President of our Sons of the Utah Pioneers, Don Hicken, will make a presentation to our Mayor Gordon Mendenhall for this new Heber City Utah Municipal Building.

Note: The Presentation was a 20" x 24" picture of Heber C. Kimball

*2nd Draft 5 May 1989*

*3rd Draft 1989*

*19 May 1989*

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*This talk was given at:*

*5 May 1989 Heber City Centennial Program*  
*Heber 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Relief Society*  
*24 Dec 1989 Heber 1<sup>st</sup> Ward Relief Society*